TOM TURNER'S DUEL.

A Story of College Life.

CHAPTER I.

ST. BOODLE'S.

It's an old story now, for this shocking affair took place in the year 1840, when Tom Turner and I were freshmen together at St. Boodle's College, the University of Oxbridge.

St. Boodle's is one of the small colleges in Oxbridge, but it had in our day, and has still, I believe, the reputation of being about the pleasantest and most comfortable place in which an undergraduate's lines could fall.

The "men" of the college were a very nice set, but it must be confessed not "a reading lot," nor much addicted to having their names appear in conspicuous places in the class-lists, but taking their degrees, when they did take them, in a quiet, sometimes in an extremely deliberate way. Once, indeed, I remember that a St. Boodle's man came out a double first; we were all as much delighted as amazed. This shows, we said, what St. Boodle's men can do when they like. But the strange thing was that none of us knew the man; we had never met him at a supper-party or a wine. It was said, and no doubt truly, that he lived in college, for all St. Boodle's men did, and certainly his name was in the calendar. And when he took his place at the high table we all admittted that his features were somehow familiar to us, and that we must have seen him in chapel or in hall. No question but that he really was a St. Boodle's man. And when Dick Slasher offered a hundred to one on it, he could find no one to take even such long odds.

But if, as a rule, we did not distinguish ourselves in the examination halls, we did pretty well elsewhere; we had five "'Versity blues" amongst us, three in the eleven and two in the eight. Our boat was high on the river, and in the hunting-field we flattered ourselves that we were unrivaled. And was not this something! As we won a steeple-chase, bumped the stern out of the boat before us in the river, or bowled down one after another of our opponents' wickets, we used to hear on all sides, "Well done, St. Boodle's! that's their style! St. Boodle's forever! Hurrah!" And we felt and knew that this was glory.

We used often to discuss the relative merits of the two theories of education—the general and the St. Boodle's theories, as I may call them. "Well," Dick Slasher used to say, "it seems to me an absurd thing to measure a man's usefulness in the world by his skill in dealing with your Greek or your cube roots, whatever they are; that's not what made England what she is. If the Duke had looked into the Senate House when the little go was going on, he'd have never said, 'That's where the Battle of Waterloo was won.' Come, I'll lay ten to one it would have been 'Go it, St. Boodle's!' with him. Will any one take me?" Of course no one took him. Even had there been any means of deciding the bet, we were all quite of his opinion, and ready to give odds, every one of us.

As for our "dons," they were a first rate set, we all agreed, with no nonsense about them. So long as a St. Boodle's man did not do anything sufficiently singular to bring his college in to undue notice, he was not interfered with, and any success in the orthodox St. Boodle's line was always heartily welcomed and applauded by the authorities. It was whispered, indeed, that one tutor, Dr. Turtle, was anxious to change the charter of St. Boodle's, and make it more of a reading college; but this, I think, was a slander. He certainly took no definite step in such a direction; and the rumor took its rise, I imagine, from a certain gruff and severe air which the doctor put on to awe freshmen and keep them down, as it were, a little at first, so that they might not be quite unmanageable by their third year.

From what has been said it may easily be supposed that college life at St. Boodle's was about as easy-going and pleasant a sort of thing as can be imagined.

CHAPTER II.

THE DUELING PISTOLS.

It was towards the end of the October—the freshman's—term that I went one evening after hall to wine with Duke. Duke, let me say, was what may be called a model of St. Boodle's man. He was reckoned the best horseman in the college, and therefore, as we believed, the best in the University. He was in the University Eleven moreover, was a capital bat, and acknowledged to be the best wicket-keeper in the team. He was besides all this, as pleasant and jovial a fellow as you would find; full of fun, and in a word quite an ornament, as we said, to his college. When I add that Duke was a "third-year man," it will be understood that he was held in much veneration by us freshmen.

Tom Turner and I went up together to Duke's rooms on the occasion I refer to. Capital rooms they were, too, and so comfortably furnished. Quite a crowd of easy chairs, and the walls were decorated with, in addition to some good engravings, fencing-foils, rackets, boxing-gloves, whip-racks, pipe-racks, and other concomitants of a thorough college (St. Boodle's) training. When Turner and I entered, there were several men already seated round the fire cracking walnuts and sipping their port—Fairchild and Tredennick, of St. Audit's, who had been dining in hall with Duke; the former of these being remarkably handsome, but very slight and delicate looking, and, as I afterwards learned, a capital actor, always taking lady's parts in the University theatrical society. There were, besides, Dick Slasher and Jack Bulfinch, of our college.

As we joined the circle, they were examining a handsome pair of dueling pistols which were being handed round for inspection. "Where did you get them? and why did you get them, and what are you going to do with them? were the questions being asked. "Well, I got them at some old fellow's auction," said Duke; "there was a crowd about the door of the house; I went up to see what was up. The pistols were going at a song when I entered; I made a bid, and they were knocked down to me, and as to what I shall do with them, I am sure I don't know. One thing you may take your oath I sha'n't do. If I am fool enough to buy w at I don't want, I'm not quite such a fool as to go in for dueling."

Upon this a discussion on the merits of dueling arose, in which, rather to our surprise, Turner stoutly advocated the practice. It was, he asserted, beneficial to society; it promoted a fine and courageous spirit; there were evils which the law could not reach, the cases in which a duel was the gentleman's only resource, and so on. Not that Tom Turner was really convinced of all this, but he thought it the right sort of thing to say.

Tom, you see, had the misfortune to be an only son; and his adoring parents had, up to this, kept him at home, where they made rather too much of him; and he was, in consequence, just the sort of fellow for whom a little "taking down" would be wholesome. He appeared his first day at lecture, I remember, in such a dilapitated condition—his gown torn, and the board of his cap broken into little pieces, that he might not look like a freshman—that Dr. Turtle insisted on his getting a new cap and gown at once.

Now this sort of thing was not liked at St. Boodle's; it was pronounced "bad form."

"A man can do as he likes here, of course," said Dick Slasher, "but affectation be hanged."

Still Turner was not a bad fellow. And had his education been perfect, why, there would have been nothing left for the University to do. And it is true, even at St. Boodles' that one lives and learns.

"Come now, Turner," said Jack Bulfinch, "it's easy to talk in that sort of way, but a state of things in which you were not able to have a dinner-party without the chance of a duel after the dessert was, in my mind, about as bad as could be; wire fences were a trifle to it."

"And all the good it did," remarked Slasher, "was to give your professional scoundrel the power of bullying his betters."

Turner could not see this. No one, he asserted, need fight unless there was a good cause; and he took leave, he said, to hold his own opinion on that subject.

"Well, old boy," said Duke, "with your way of thinking, it's more than likely that you will have an affair of honor before you pass the little go; and if you do, I'll lend you these tools, and be your second to boot."

"All right! So you shall," replied Turner; and the subject dropped.

CHAPTER III.

MISS TREDENNICK.

About a week after this Duke and Tredennick came to my rooms one morning.

"Come, like a good fellow," said the latter, "and dine with me this evening. Excuse short invitation. I want to show my sister a little college life; how we unfortunate fellows do when we are torn from the bosom of our families; and I have asked a few fellows to dinner."

"Have you seen his sister?" Duke whispered to me as he was leaving. "Splendid creature! Turner's asked too; be sure and bring him with you."

Accordingly, at six o'clock I found myself in Tredennick's rooms, in St. Audit's. Turner was already there. Duke and Bulfinch entered almost with me.

"Well, we are all here now; dinner may come up," said Tredennick. "Let me introduce you to my sister."

Then a young lady left the window, where she had been sitting, and came towards us.

"My sister—Mr. Bulfinch, Mr. Duke, Mr. Turner, Mr. Standish—all of St. Boodle's," said Tredennick, as we made our bows.

I have a particularly good memory for faces, and the moment Miss Tredennick turned towards me hers struck me as familiar; but I could not think where I had seen her. She was a very handsome girl; a dark style of beauty, and not a bit like her brother. She was very tall and fine-looking, with dark hair and pale complexion and well-cut features. The mouth, indeed, was a little too large, but it gave the face a pleasant expression. She had slightly arched eyebrows, long dark eyelashes, and, to crown all, a pair of splendid dark eyes. She wore a black velvet gown with long sleeves, and with a lace frill about the neck and wrists. The dress was most becoming, and Miss Tredennick looked in it, I don't say pretty, but stately, magnificent. She was not a person to forget. "Where can I have seen her?" I asked myself.

"I wonder who will have the luck to take her in to dinner," whispered Duke. "Isn't she a stunner, Turner?"

Turner evidently thought so. He clearly was falling in love with her as fast as possible; he could not take his eyes off her or listen to anything any one else was saying.

It fell to no one's lot to take Miss Tredennick in to dinner.

Tredennick had been fortunate enough to get rooms which had been intended for a don, and so had two sitting-rooms; in the inner of these—his study—dinner was laid. When it was announced, Tredennick said to his sister;

"Well, Lucy, we can not all take you in, and as it would be invidious to make any distinction, pray go first, and we shall follow."

And so we went in to dinner and seated ourselves at the table, Turner contriving to secure for himself a seat beside the lady.

The dinner passed off most pleasantly. Duke and Tredennick were both in great spirits, telling capital stories and making no end of jokes. Turner was also enjoying himself, and no wonder, for Miss Tredennick was evidently making herself very agreeable. They never ceased talking to one another all the time.

Dinner over, Miss Tredennick withdrew, and when the decanter had gone round a couple of times, our host proposed that we should follow her and have some music.

"My sister," he said, "is supposed to play and sing pretty fairly."

There was a piano in the next room, and Miss Tredennick was easily persuaded to gratify us; and certainly her brother had not spoken too highly of her powers. She had a quite unusual contralto voice, which, for a lady, was singularly strong and full in the lower notes, and she sang with much spirit and feeling. She played well, too, her touch being both firm and full of expression. For appearance, though, I should have preferred a smaller and less muscular hand. After a little while, Tredennick, rather to my disappointment, proposed that we should have a rubber of whist, to which Bulfinch and Duke at once agreed.

"Who will take the fourth hand? My sister does not play. Will you, Standish?" our host asked.

"Well," I said, "I have no objection; but there's Turner, perhaps he would—"

"O, not at all!" exclaimed Tom, eagerly. "I had much rather look on, indeed I would. I am a wretched hand at whist."

"O, don't let us have him," whispered Duke to me; "he'd be sure to revoke. Don't you see there's only one suit he's capable of thinking of now?"

"Perhaps Mr. Turner would like a little more music," said Miss Tredennick, with the sweetest smile.

"Of course he would," said her brother: "and as you are going to play, we shall go into the next room, so as not to be distracted by the ravishing sounds. Come along, Standish. Fill your glasses and make yourselves as comfortable as the circumstances will admit," said our host, as we sat down at the whist table. "My sister and Turner will amuse one another very well for a bit, and when he likes he can cut in."

So we began our rubber.

The door between the rooms was left open, and we could hear the singing very well. Miss Tredennick was most obliging, and sang quite a number of songs, which I confess I attended more than to our game, and so played very badly. I remember one song in particular; it was of a plaintive character, and the low notes of Miss Tredennick's voice sounded most touching and full of feeling. I just caught the words, almost whispered as they were:

"For me the summer's waning,
Rayless the depths above;
Dark all the days remaining:
He does not know that I love."

Come, now, I thought to myself, you are not so old and the prospect is not quite so gloomy as all that; and if he does not know, it's not your fault. You see, I was feeling a little annoyed with Turner—too bad of him to have all the fun.

Then the singing ceased, and I was able to attend better to the game.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Borrowed from the Babylonians.

[Contemporary Review.]

We have only to look at our watches to see that we are Babylonian. Why is our hour divided into 60 minutes, our minutes into 60 seconds? Would not a division of the hour into 10 or 50 or 100 minutes have been more natural? We have 60 divisions on the dials of our watches simply because the Greek astronomer Hipparchus, who lived in the second century B. C., accepted the Babylonian system of reckoning time, that system being sexagesimal.

The Babylonians knew the decimal system, but, for practical purposes, they counted by so-si and sari, the sossos representing 60, the saros 60x60, or 3,600. From Hipparchus that system found its way into the works of Ptolemy, about 150 A. D., and thence it was carried down the stream of civilization, finding its last resting place in the dial-plates of our clocks. And why are there 20 shillings to our sovereign? Again the real reason lies in Babylon. The Greeks learned from the Babylonians the art of dividing gold and silver for the purpose of trade. It has been proved that the current gold-piece of Western Asia was exactly the sixtieth part of a Babylonian mna, or Mina. It was nearly equal to our sovereign.

The difficult problem of the relative value of gold and silver in a bi-monetary currency had been solved to a certain extent in the ancient Mesopotamian Kingdom, the proportion between gold and silver being fixed at 1 to 13 1-3. The silver shekel current in Babylon was heavier than the gold shekel in the proportion of 13 1-3 to 10, and had, therefore, the value of one-tenth of a gold shekel, and the half-silver shekel, called by the Greeks a drachma, was worth one-twentieth of a gold shekel. The drachma, or half-silver shekel, may therefore be looked upon as the most ancient type of our own silver shilling in its relation of one-twentieth of our gold sovereign.